

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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O P 291144Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2629
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY

S E C R E T BEIRUT 9048

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, LE, IS, TC
SUBJECT: RUMORED MOVEMENT OF UAE TROOPS TO TYRE INCORRECT

REF: STATE 312376 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. UAE BATTALION HAS ENTERED LEBANON, BUT IS PRESENTLY DEPLOYED IN HILLS EAST OF BEIRUT. IT HAS NOT PROCEEDED TO TYRE OR ANYWHERE ELSE IN SOUTH. ASF IS DEVELOPING A PLAN TO DEPLOY UAE, SAUDI AND SUDANESE TROOPS TO SOUTH, PARTICULARLY IN TYRE AND NABATIYAH, BUT NO FINAL DECISION HAS YET BEEN MADE, AND MOVE IS NOT IMMIMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ASF LEBANESE LIAISON STAFF TELLS US THAT UAE BATTALION OF SOME 750-800 TROOPS ENTERED LEBANON DEC 28 AND IS NOW ENCAMPED SOMEWHERE IN HILLS OVERLOOKING BEIRUT, BUT HAS NOT REPEAT NOT MOVED SOUTH. REAR ELEMENT OF HEADQUARTERS -- SOME 150 TROOPS -- IS STILL IN DAMASCUS. RELIABLE DATT SOURCE TRAVELED ROAD FROM NABATIYAH THROUGH TYRE AND ALONG COAST TO BEIRUT EARLY DEC 29 AND SAW NO REPEAT NO SIGNS ANYWHERE OF UAE TROOPS.

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ACCORDING TO EMIL BUSTANI, IN OFFICE OOF GOVERNATE OF SIDON, WHO CHECKED MID-MORNING DEC 29 WITH LEBANESE ASF LIAISON OFFICER, NO REPEAT NO UAE TROOPS HAVE PASSED THROUGH SIDON, AND ASF IN SIDON HAS NOT REPEAT NOT BEEN INFORMED OF ANY SUCH ANTICIPATED MOVE.

3. INDEPENDENT-CONSERVATIVE BEIRUT NEWSPAPER ANWAR AS WELL AS RIGHTIST NEWSPAPER ASHARQ, QUOTING AFP, DEC 29 REPORTED THAT UAE UNIT OF 1500 TROOPS ARRIVED IN BEIRUT DEC 28 FROM DAMASCUS AND PROCEEDED ONWARD IN DIRECTION OF TYRE. COMMENT: THIS REPORT, WHICH MAY BE SOURCE OF ISRAELI CONCERN, IS CLEARLY INACCURATE, BOTH INsofar AS IT SAYS UAE TROOPS PASSED THROUGH BEIRUT AND AS TO THE NUMBER OF TROOPS INVOLVED. ASF STAFF AS WELL AS EARLIER REPORTS (E.G. USDAO DAMASCUS 071519Z DEC) CONSISTENTLY HAVE INDICATED SOME 700-900 TROOPS, OR ONE REINFORCED BATTALION.

4. BEIRUT AP BUREAU CHIEF NICK LUDDINGTON TELLS US AP HAD REPORT DEC 28 THAT UAE UNIT ENTERED LEBANON BUT TURNED SOUTH SOMEWHERE BEFORE BEIRUT, POSSIBLY EVEN IN BEKAA VALLEY. AP, AS OF EARLY DEC 29, HOWEVER, HAS NO RPT NO INFORMATION ON PRESENT LOCATION OF UAE TROOPS.

5. SEVERAL AMERICAN JOURNALISTS HEARD RUMORS OF UAE TROOP MOVEMENT TO TYRE AND DEPARTED BEIRUT EARLY DEC 29 TO INVESTIGATE, INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF AP, UPI AND CBS. SHOULD THEY DISCOVER ANY UAE TROOPS, WE WILL REPORT IT.

6. ASF LEBANESE LIAISON STAFF TELLS US PLAN IS BEING DEVELOPED TO DEPLOY UAE, SAUDI AND SUDANESE TROOPS IN SOUTH, PARTICULARLY AT TYRE AND NABATIYAH. HOWEVER, FINAL DECISION HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN EITHER TO IMPLEMENT PLAN, OR ON ITS TIMING. LIKELY PRELIMINARY
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STEPS, SUCH AS ARRANGEMENTS FOR BILLETS IN TYRE, HAVE NOT REPEAT NOT YET BEEN TAKEN.

7. COMMENT: REPORTS OF UAE TROOP MOVEMENTS COME AT TIME OF INCREASED TENSION IN LEBANON AS RESULT OF REVELATION OF PALESTINIAN PLANS TO MOVE HEAVY WEAPONS TO THE SOUTH. PIERRE GEMAYEL DEC 28, ACCORDING TO ANWAR, WARNS THAT PALESTINIAN MOVES TO SOUTH COULD "COMPEL ISRAEL TO CARRY OUT ITS AMBITIONS IN THE SOUTH." IT IS POSSIBLE THAT STORY ON UAE MOVEMENTS WAS PLANTED DELIBERATELY TO ELICIT ISRAELI REACTION.
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